

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — July 26, 2001 (WSDA 01-26)

Gov. Locke will lead international trade mission to Japan and Korea

OLYMPIA — Gov. Gary Locke will lead an international trade mission to Japan and Korea in September to promote bilateral trade, tourism and foreign investment in Washington.

“Washington state and Japan share a rich history,” Locke said. “For more than 100 years we have been trading partners. Today, Japan is our largest export market. We want to grow that relationship even more. From high tech to agriculture, Japan represents a huge market for Washington products.”

Martha Choe, director of the state Office of Trade and Economic Development, Fred Kiga, director of the state Department of Revenue, Jim Jesernig, director of the state Department of Agriculture and business leaders from across the state will join the governor on the mission.

Japan is Washington state’s number-one trading partner. Trade with Japan accounted for nearly 26 percent of Washington’s total trade in 1999. Despite the economic slowdown in Asia, Japan remains the world’s second-largest economy and accounts for nearly three-quarters of the entire Asian economy.

With over \$1 billion in food and agricultural purchases per year, Japan is Washington’s top export market for the state’s agriculture and processed-food industry.

Japan also is Washington state’s number one overseas tourism market with more than 100,000 Japanese residents visiting the state in 1998, according to the Overseas Travel to Washington State Study conducted by Dean Runyan Associates.

“Companies such as Boeing, Microsoft, Starbucks and the Seattle Mariners are known throughout Japan and Korea,” Locke said. “We hope to further raise awareness of Washington and our products and encourage even greater trade and tourism.”

In addition to promoting Washington state, the governor and his staff will meet with Japanese government officials to clarify issues affecting the import of our state’s products.

Korea is Washington’s fourth-largest trading partner and constitutes an increasingly important market for Washington state goods, services and agricultural products. Korea also is the leader in Asia for the implementation and use of Internet technology.

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As in Japan, there is strong demand in Korea for software, telecommunications services, medical equipment and environmental products and services. The two nations are top markets for Washington cherries, french fries, seafood and processed foods.

“Korea represents a unique trading opportunity for Washington state,” Locke said.

Beginning in 1997, the Korean government implemented reforms that put the country on a more open, market-oriented path. As a result of the reforms, Korea has made it easier to import foreign goods.

“We must take advantage of this and encourage trade and tourism between Korea and Washington,” the governor added.

Locke’s main objectives for the mission include opening doors for Washington state businesses, meeting with key leaders to improve conditions for business and furthering trade, tourism, investment and cultural relations in these markets.

The delegation plans to:

- Meet with government and business officials in each city, including agriculture officials
- Host investment seminars to promote business investment in Washington
- Host a tourism seminar to promote Washington state as a travel destination

Who: Gov. Gary Locke
Martha Choe, director, OTED
Fred Kiga, director, DOR
Jim Jesernig, director, WSDA

What: International trade mission to Japan and Korea

When: Depart Saturday, Sept. 22
Return Saturday, Sept. 29

Where: Seoul, Korea (Sept. 22-25)
Kobe, Japan (Sept. 26)
Tokyo, Japan (Sept. 27-29)

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